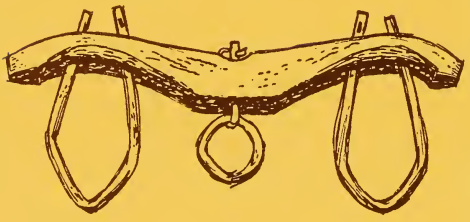
Meet Abraham Lincoln

LINCOLN ROOM



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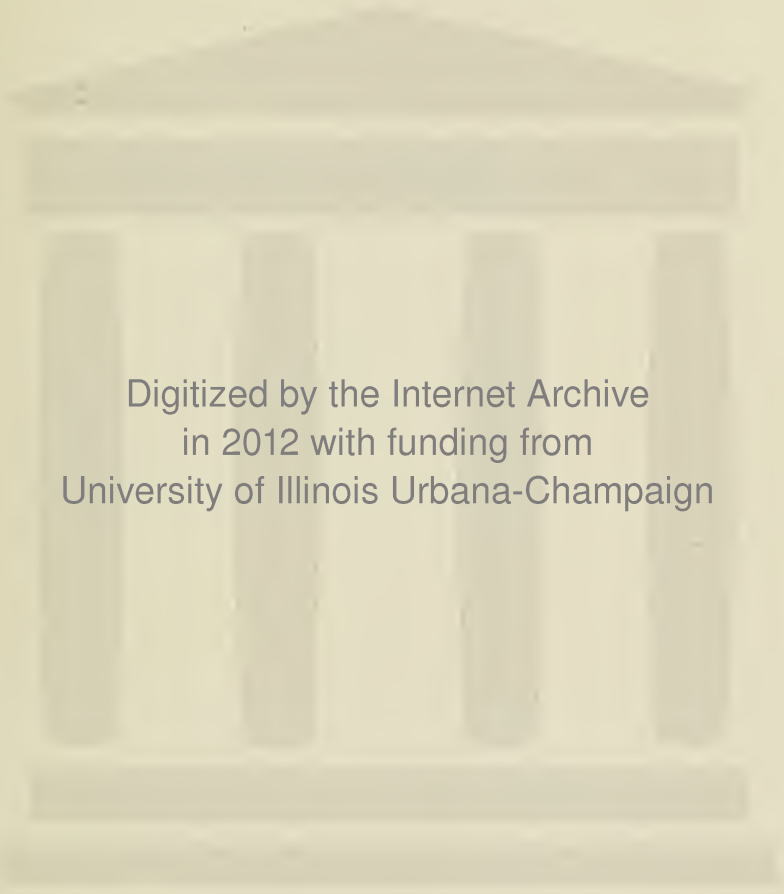
To J. G. Randall

who has placed
thousands students
forever in his debt.

With all good wishes

G. Lynn Summers

New York
Jan 30, 1946



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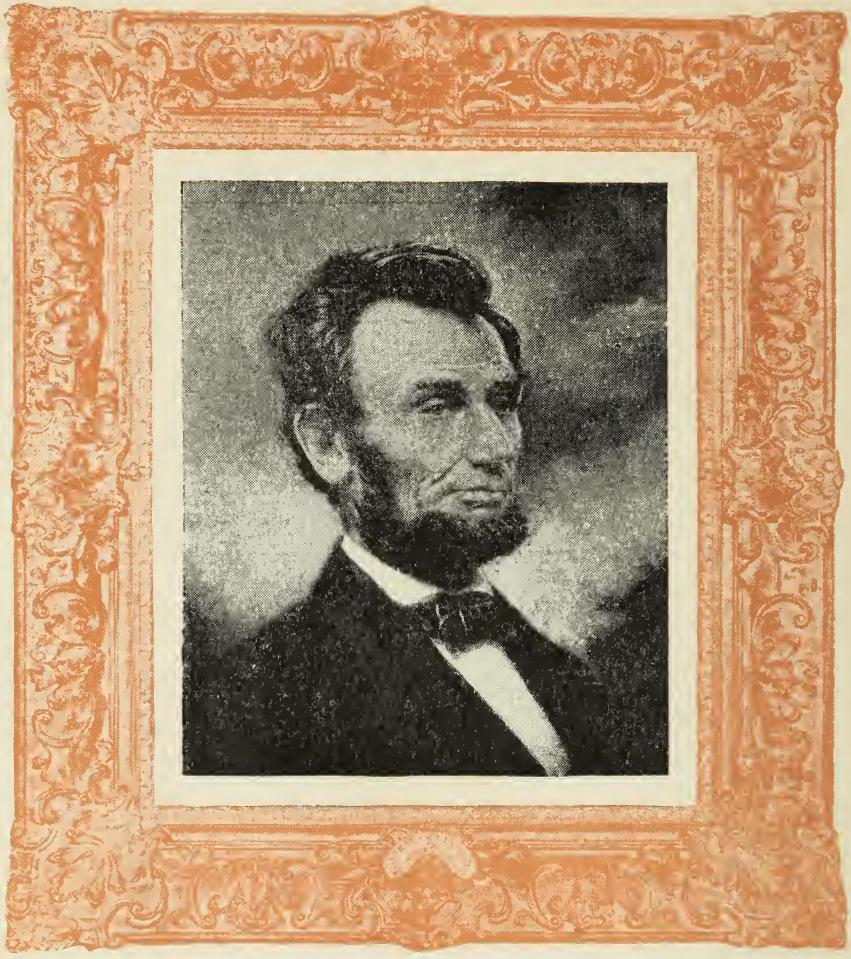
Meet Abraham Lincoln



A PORTRAIT

BY FRANKLIN C. COURTER

FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

Meet Abraham Lincoln

PROFILES OF THE PRAIRIE PRESIDENT

BY

G. LYNN SUMNER

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MEET ABRAHAM LINCOLN

An Introduction

THIS BOOK has been written, not for Lincoln scholars, but in the hope that it may prompt more people, especially young people, to become, in a modest way, Lincoln students.

In these days when the words freedom and democracy are used so freely, and so often with slight sense of their true meaning, it is a richly rewarding experience to make the acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln. For, to quote Blaine Brooks Gernon: "Possibly Lincoln was not the greatest lawyer, legislator, or executive of even his own times. But he was, in both words and life, the very embodiment of democracy. And so he remains, the world over, today. He set democracy and its governmental philosophy to music with the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural."*

In his slow emergence through the rugged schools of local, State and national politics, Lincoln was the very symbol of a government that comes from close to the people.

Ask the average American to give you a few facts about Lincoln and he will tell you that Lincoln was born in a log cabin, that he split rails, that he debated with Douglas, that he was President during the Civil War, that he freed the slaves, that he made a speech at Gettysburg, and that he was

**Lincoln and the Political Circus.*

assassinated. To most people, especially the young, he is a far-away figure, occupying a place already remote in history.

I can say this in all fairness, not only because I have questioned many and received such replies, but because, up to a certain evening in 1920, that would have been my own reaction to the mention of his name. But on that particular evening, I attended a performance of John Drinkwater's fine play, *Abraham Lincoln,* with Frank McGlynn in the title role. And gradually, as the evening passed, I realized that a figure that had always seemed very far away had now become very present and very real. Here he was, in the plain sitting room of the Springfield home, in the shabby upstairs law office. Then, far from these familiar, homely surroundings, we saw him in the White House, the lone, central figure in a great crisis. And somehow, for the first time, he seemed not remote at all, but very real and very human, and very simple and very tragic. I went out of the theater that night moved by a great desire to know more about the man I had just met.

Years before, as a boy, I had read Ida M. Tarbell's *Life of Lincoln.* I now read it again, with avid new interest. But even a biography so well done is but a sketchbook of a life so full of meaning to Americans. I read other biographies, by Charnwood, and Barton, and Beveridge. Then I went back to those written closer to Lincoln's time—to the biographies by Lincoln's contemporaries: John G. Holland, the novelist, and Ward H. Lamon, Lincoln's friend and sometime bodyguard; William H. Herndon, his law partner, and Nicolay and Hay, his secretaries.

Gradually, out of much reading, came the conviction that the way really to know a man is not so much by reading books that span his life, as by taking, one by one, those interests that lie closest to him, and following them through many sources

of enlightening information. The backgrounds of Lincoln's life have been painted by many biographers, on canvas broad and narrow, but the high lights of his character have been filled in with true illumination by few.

What did he read? Whom did he love? What was the secret of his mastery of men? How did he get along with his cabinet, with his generals? What were those deep convictions that guided him every step of the way through the dark and bloody years of civil war?

Seeking the answers to questions such as these, following the trails of such random themes across the course of Lincoln's life, has been, of itself, a richly rewarding, enlightening experience.

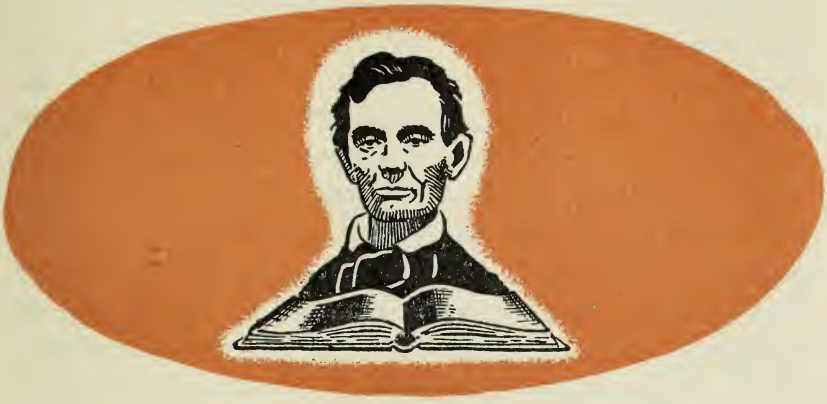
Out of such reading have come the chapters of this book. Each is complete in itself, yet each aims to contribute its part to a clearer, larger picture of Abraham Lincoln, the man, the lawyer, the politician, the President—the savior of the Union, the symbol of democracy.

Of course, only the advanced Lincoln student of today has hope of unearthing new and original material. But riches are available between the covers of almost countless books, some little known to the average reader. While it is quite impossible to list all those from which we have drawn both information and inspiration, we have found unusual pleasure and profit in *The Diary of Gideon Welles,* in which Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy profusely recorded each night his accounts of meetings of the war cabinet; *Washington in Lincoln's Time,* by Noah Brooks, the newspaper correspondent who enjoyed the President's confidence and friendship, spending long evenings with him in the executive offices; *Lincoln, Master of Men,* by Alonzo Rothschild, one of the best of all Lincoln books; *Lincoln's Rise to Power,* by William E. Bar-

inger; *Abraham Lincoln, Master of Words,* by Daniel Kilham Dodge; and *Why Lincoln Laughed,* by Dr. Russel H. Conwell. Carl Sandburg's monumental works, *Abraham Lincoln, the Prairie Years,* and *Abraham Lincoln, the War Years,* constitute the most complete of all Lincoln biographies. Then there are the volumes of *Lincoln Lore* studiously compiled and published by Dr. Louis A. Warren, of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the publications of Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.

These are but suggestions for those who, having met Abraham Lincoln, are inspired to explore further, the fascinating, great, and simple story of a great and simple American. If this present volume prompts even one person to join the growing family of Lincoln students, it will be a cause for deep satisfaction to the author.

LINCOLN AND HIS BOOKS



IN ALL HIS LIFE, Abraham Lincoln knew only a few months of school. His youth and later life were one long hunger for printed words. He would tramp miles through the night and the wilderness to borrow a book. Yet, with all his poverty of material goods and all his handicaps in formal education, he became a master of English prose.

No other American president has left so many letters, speeches and State papers of enduring quality and significance. None has expressed so ably, in simple, readable, memorable phrase, the practical ideals of democracy.

How did it happen? What did he read? How did he achieve such a magic way with words?

It is true that in his youth he read few books, but those books had a profound influence in molding Lincoln's mind and in shaping the whole course of his career. He was just a lanky, sinewy farm hand in Spencer County, Indiana, when this thirst for knowledge marked him apart among the boys of that frontier. Night after night, he lay stretched out flat

on his stomach before the fireplace, reading and re-reading every book he could discover in his sparsely settled neighborhood. He carried a book to the fields in the pocket of his jeans, and read when the plough halted at the end of a long furrow. He read on the way to the mill. He read as he sat on the rail fence watching cattle. And because his books were so pitifully few, he literally devoured them, pondered and mastered the meaning of every page and paragraph—even memorized long passages and repeated them to the boys who gathered around the stove in the Gentryville store.

No wonder those books had such an influence upon the hungry, eager, reaching mind. What were they? Most authorities agree that during this period, Lincoln read the Bible, Weems' *Life of Washington, Aesop's Fables, Robinson Crusoe,* and *Pilgrim's Progress.* We have his own word for it that the first book which aroused his curiosity in regard to the Union of States and its beginning was the *Life of Washington.* His imagination was stirred by the story of men struggling for their liberty. Washington became to him a truly exalted figure, and the nation Washington had fought to establish became to him something which men might also die to preserve. This book, simple as it was, gave him, further, the first glimpse of the rights of states and nations and the principles of government.

From *Aesop's Fables,* Lincoln caught the aptness of parable for illustration. The short and homely and unfailingly appropriate stories with which he gave point to address and argument can be directly traced to the inspiration of this book.

Robinson Crusoe and *Pilgrim's Progress* left no notable trace on his later writings or his character, but surely they stirred the imagination of a mind so impressionable.

The Bible was to Lincoln, as to all the pioneers, a book to

be read not once, but again and again. For him it not only held the basis of a faith that emerged at its strongest in his later years, but it was a book of infinite variety. It held the stories of Ruth and Rachel and David, the supreme verse of the Psalms, the example of simple and ordered narrative.

But these books only spurred him in his desire for more. "My best friend," Lincoln said in those early days, "is the one who'll git me a book I ain't read." He found such a friend in Dave Turnham, of Gentryville, and the book he borrowed from him was *The Revised Statutes of Indiana.* This was a remarkable volume to fall into the hands of a boy who had been moved by the inspiring life of Washington. It contained the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the act establishing the Northwest Territory, the ordinance providing for its government, and some four hundred pages of Indiana laws.

When Lincoln had read this book and had mastered it as he mastered all books, he had, before he was eighteen, a clear and practical understanding of how the nation was founded, how the State of Indiana came into being, and how that State was governed. There is no doubt that the book aroused in him an intense interest in government and the law.

He borrowed and read, of course, many other books in the years that followed. But one book in particular, coming to him by purest accident, marked, perhaps, the turning point of his early life. It was 1833, and Lincoln was twenty-four years old. He had moved three years before to New Salem, Illinois, and after trying, with little success, many an odd job, he had bought on credit a half-interest in a store. Business was slim enough with the firm of Berry and Lincoln. The young Lincoln had little talent for trade, and much of his time he lay stretched out on the counter, reading Shakespeare and

Burns. On summer days he lay on the grass before the store, his long legs extended up the trunk of a tree.

One such day, according to tradition, a man driving a covered wagon to the West stopped in front of the store and asked Lincoln whether he would care to buy a barrel that seemed to be just one barrel too many in his load. It contained odds and ends of household rubbish and Lincoln did not much want it, but he gave the man half a dollar and put the barrel away in the store. Some time later he came upon it, and out of curiosity emptied it on the floor. To the amazement of his hungry eyes, there fell out from the very bottom a set of Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England.* Those priceless volumes, inspiration and revelation to every young student of the law, at once absorbed every waking moment of his days and nights.

It is little wonder that the next year the store failed and the business was sold. Lincoln again offered himself as a candidate for the Illinois Assembly, was elected at the age of twenty-five for his first term, and two years later he took up the study of law in the office of Major John T. Stuart, in Springfield. There he lived; there he married; from there he went to serve a single term in Congress; and there he returned to practice law for twenty years on the circuit of the Eighth District of Illinois. The reading of three books—the *Life of Washington,* the *Revised Statutes of Indiana,* and Blackstone, had helped to shape the course of his thinking and his life.

No consideration of Lincoln's reading is adequate without recognition of his love of poetry. In New Salem, an itinerant philosopher had lent him volumes of Shakespeare and Burns. All the rest of his life he read them. Burns he almost knew by heart. Long passages of Shakespeare he memorized. *Macbeth* was his favorite. Its tragedy and that of *Lear* and *Hamlet*

seemed to appeal to his often-despondent nature. The very week of his assassination, he read aloud to Senator Charles Sumner on the steamer returning from Richmond this prophetic speech from *Macbeth:*

> Besides, this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off.

But how did the books that Lincoln read influence the style in which he wrote? How was it that one self-schooled became such a master of words? of simple, forceful, smooth, persuasive speech?

It was the result, we may well believe, of an early and long-practiced habit of a mastery of meaning, that he might make clear to others what he had read or what he had heard.

"Even as a small boy," he once told a friend, "I can remember going to my bedroom after hearing the neighbors talk to my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down, trying to make out the exact meaning of some of their sayings. I could not sleep until I had repeated it over and over, until I had put it into language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend."

Later, as he read, Lincoln related to neighborhood gatherings the discoveries he had made in the pages of books. He took part in local political discussions. He loved to engage in argument and debate, developing his reasoning, until, through its very clarity, it must convince. Remember, too, that twenty years of law practice on the circuit was the best possible preparation for the debates of the 'fifties and the State papers of the 'sixties. The simplicity of statement necessary to convince the jurors of early Illinois is the simplicity that still

carries conviction to the most critical reader of his letters and speeches today.

Lincoln sought never to confuse, but to make his side of a case so clear that even the most ordinary mental faculties could grasp it.

In every controversy, he had supreme confidence in informed public opinion. He had faith in the people to do the right thing, once they had the facts upon which to base a judgment. But he realized how necessary it was, that, in talking to the people, he place the truth before them in terms so simple that they would not only *understand* but would be *convinced.*

To that end he bought in the early 'fifties a book called *The Elements of Euclid*—a book twenty-three centuries old. He had been told that it presented the best example of pure logic. He devoted weeks and months to the study and mastery of its contents. From its pages he learned how to analyze the true and the relatively true, how to untangle fallacies, how to show mistakes in reasoning. When he encountered the word "demonstration," he looked it up in Noah Webster's dictionary and found that it meant "proof beyond possibility of a doubt."

"When I was through with Euclid," he said, "I thought I knew what 'demonstration' meant." He was determined now that in what he wrote and in what he spoke, he would be as simple as the alphabet, as definite as numbers, as sure as a demonstrated proposition in Euclid.

Out of such practical methods and his continued reading of the masters of English prose and poetry, grew a facility in the spoken and written word; a purity, a simplicity, that resulted in expressions of undying fame.

Many of Lincoln's speeches and letters are familiar to all. But it is interesting to dip here and there into some of his

letters and addresses for passages that characterize his style. There were times when his sheer eloquence was the equal of Webster's or Burke's. For example, on Washington's Birthday, 1842, he gave the address of the day at Springfield, Illinois, and closed with this tribute to the one who had been to him an idol from early boyhood:

> To add brightness to the sun, or glory to the name of Washington, is alike impossible. Let none attempt it. In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked, deathless splendor leave it shining on.

Six years later, as a member of Congress, critical, like all Whigs, of President Polk and his conduct of the war with Mexico, he said in one of his few speeches to the House:

> Let him remember he sits where Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer as Washington would answer.

The finest examples of Lincoln's prose were, of course, written or spoken during the war years. Many consider the Second Inaugural his masterpiece; but there are less familiar papers with stirring passages packed to the full with meaning. For example, the second message to Congress:

> The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

Then there is the closing paragraph of the Emancipation Proclamation, which, for beauty and brevity, could hardly be surpassed:

> And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

Here, in a sentence of thirty-three words, Lincoln presented a complete explanation and legal defense of the freeing of the slaves.

Such simplicity and compactness marked all his speeches, his letters, and even his telegrams during the later years. There was, for example, the note he sent to Stanton, after the Secretary of War had refused a military appointment to a distinguished engineer because of the strictness of Stanton's examining board. Lincoln wrote:

> I personally wish Jacob Freese, of New Jersey, to be appointed colonel for a colored regiment, and this regardless of whether he can tell the exact shade of Julius Caesar's hair.

Finally, let us turn to the Gettysburg Address—not the familiar words themselves, but to the circumstances under which they were spoken. The dedication of the battle-field cemetery took place on November 19, 1863, and, in accordance with the custom of the times, there was an orator of the day—the famed and eloquent Edward Everett. He spoke for two hours, and then Lincoln spoke for something less than two minutes. Contrary to tradition, his brief address was in no sense hastily prepared. It had been planned and written out in part in Washington with the serious care with which Lincoln always prepared his public addresses. But strangely, as we see it now, the significance and the stately grandeur of those words were appreciated by only a few until many years afterward.

Most newspapers, in reporting the dedication, mentioned only that the President spoke. Some gave a garbled account of what he said. Some viciously criticized. Only a few publications in the whole country remarked upon the speech with any editorial enthusiasm—the *Springfield Republican,* the *Boston Transcript,* the *Providence Journal,* the *Philadelphia Bulletin,* and *Harper's Weekly,* to cite the most outstanding ones.

But most interesting of all is the statement of Charles A. Dana, who wrote in his *Reminiscences of the Civil War* that Secretary Stanton said to him:

> Edward Everett has made a speech that will make three columns in the newspaper, and Mr. Lincoln has made a speech of perhaps forty or fifty lines . . . but Lincoln's speech will be read by a thousand men where one reads Everett's and will be remembered as long as anybody's speeches are remembered who speaks in the English language.

This, remember, was the observation of the Democrat whom Lincoln had made his Secretary of War; the man who criticized him cruelly, then came to hold for him a great affection.

In his *Abraham Lincoln, Master of Words,* Daniel Kilham Dodge reminds us of the curious coincidence that in the same year of 1809, both Gladstone and Lincoln were born—one in easy circumstances and in the ruling class; the other in the poverty of a Kentucky cabin. One attended Eton and Oxford; the other tramped the frontier trails to borrow books. One entered Parliament the same year in which the other began his political career in Illinois. In the decades that followed, both cast strong shadows across the political activities of their peoples. Gladstone was a statesman, a

scholar, an orator. Thousands listened to the polished periods of his addresses, awed by his personality, charmed by his magnificent voice.

Yet today, scarcely anyone in England or America can point to words of the great Gladstone in the living literatures of the world, while English schoolboys commit to memory Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as the finest speech of its kind ever written in the English language.

LINCOLN AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was a man in a world of men. From boyhood to the presidency, he lived and moved and had his being among men's interests, men's activities, men's thoughts. Chopping wood and splitting rails in Indiana and Illinois; guiding a flatboat down the Mississippi; wrestling the ruffians of Clary's Grove; telling stories in taverns and village stores; riding the circuit, speaking from the stump, playing the shrewd politics of a frontier State—this was all man's work, calculated to build the bone and sinew of a sturdy body, to sharpen the wit and quicken the reasoning of a man among men.

Yet, through all of Lincoln's life, there runs a shining thread that traces the influence of the women he loved. Two of them he loved beautifully in the years of his youth; three of them he loved tragically in the years of his maturity.

* * *

Lincoln's mother was Nancy Hanks, who had been born in Virginia and carried westward across the mountains in her

own mother's arms. She had grown to girlhood in the hard, plain life of a frontier cabin. She was dark and slender, with keen gray eyes. Somehow she seemed to see visions beyond the mists of the hills. But her days were filled with scrubbing and washing and cooking and patching. When she was twenty-two, she married Thomas Lincoln, a plain, honest, substantial carpenter, and they rode away on his horse along the timber trails to a new cabin at Elizabethtown, in Hardin County, Kentucky.

They moved next to a cabin on the South Fork of Nolin River near where the town of Hodgenville now stands. The floor was packed-down dirt. One door swung on leather hinges. One window looked out on the woods and the rolling fields. There in that cabin on February 12, 1809—a Sunday—Abraham Lincoln was born. And there, while his wilderness mother cooked, washed, sewed, and spun, the boy grew.

Once again the family moved. This time they went northward to a farm on Knob Creek which was located within the confines of Hardin County (now Larue). Here there was better land to till, and more cabinets and coffins for Tom to make. When little Abe was seven, they moved again, this time north, into the tempting riches of the free lands of Indiana. There on Little Pigeon Creek they lived a while in a pole shed that opened to the south, its roof of branches, brush and mud. Then they built a cabin in which the boy and his father and his sister Sarah were destined to live for fourteen years.

When he was nine, Abe and his sister went a few weeks to a crude school. Tom Lincoln said it was a waste of time, but Nancy scrubbed the boy's ears and combed the tangles out of his coarse black hair and sent him off to walk several miles through the timberland to the make-shift schoolhouse. Per-

haps she still had visions that reached beyond that clearing, reached even to the stars. But what lay beyond for that boy of hers, she was not to know. For in the autumn of 1818, a strange sickness came to southern Indiana.

Many fell ill, among them Nancy Hanks Lincoln, and on the seventh day, on a bed of poles cleated to the corner of the cabin, she sank into the never-ending sleep that soothed at last the pain and eased the weariness of her strenuous life.

Lincoln loved his mother and her memory. He believed that many of his own strong mental traits could be traced to her. He recalled that with all her handicaps, she was highly intellectual by nature, of accurate judgment, cool and heroic always. Once he said, with deep feeling, "God bless my mother. All that I am or hope to be I owe to her."

* * *

Tom Lincoln remained a widower just a year. Then, one day in November, 1819, he saddled his horse, bade the children goodbye and rode back to Kentucky—to Elizabethtown, where, before his marriage to Nancy Hanks, he had unsuccessfully courted Sarah Bush. She had married another and was now herself a widow with three children. He went directly to her house.

"Mrs. Johnston," he said, "I have no wife and you no husband. I came a-purpose to marry you. I've no time to lose; and if you're willin', let it be done straight off."

"I got debts," she answered.

He paid them, a license was issued, and on December 2 they were married. Although she had debts, Sarah Bush had more tables and chairs and chests, and knives and forks and spoons, and spinning wheels, and clothes, than Nancy Hanks had ever possessed in all her life. So Tom Lincoln borrowed a wagon and three horses from his brother-in-law, Ralph

Crume, making, with his own saddle-horse, a four-horse team, and several days later they arrived at the cabin on Little Pigeon Creek.

"Abe," said his father, as the boy looked up at the strong, rosy woman, "here's your new ma." She took his small rough hands in hers, held his head against her motherly body. She went into the cabin, took the corn husks out of the boy's bed; and that night, for the first time in his life, Abe sank into the welcome softness of a feather pillow and a feather bed.

Thus came into the life of this boy of destiny the second woman he loved. For twelve years after that—from the age of nine until he was twenty-one—through the vital, formative years of his youth, Abraham Lincoln had the tender, affectionate care of this kindly stepmother. Tom Lincoln never understood his son, but Sarah Bush did. She never failed to praise and encourage him. She sympathized with his consuming desire to read and to learn, to better express his thoughts. No wonder he admired and loved her. He carried through all his life a finer ideal of womanhood because of her. And all his life he provided for her comfort.

At twenty-one, he left home to make his own way, but his stepmother was always close to his heart. After his election to the presidency, he went from Springfield to her home in Goose Nest Prairie. She cherished that visit and clung to him with real maternal affection. She was proud of his election, but a strange premonition told her that some tragedy lay ahead—that she would never see him again. She never did see him again—although she lived long after tragedy had stalked the boards in Ford's Theater. But to her last hours she treasured and loved his memory as he had loved her.

* * *

We now pass to a period of Lincoln's life when his heart

was stirred by affections of a different nature from those inspired by maternal care. And in order to understand some of the events of this, his middle life, it is necessary to understand something of his traits of character and of the times in which he lived.

The pioneers married early in life. Girls of marriageable age were relatively few in any community. Courtships were brief. When a young man met an attractive maid, even for the first time, he thought of her, no doubt, in terms of possible matrimony.

Imagine, then, how such a situation stirred silent thoughts in Lincoln, the soul of honor, yet the very personification of caution. Deeply conscious of his poverty, his ungainly physical appearance, his ineptness in all his contacts with women, he contemplated matrimony as the most serious of all responsibilities. He enjoyed the company of women, craved their confidence and companionship; yet always he suffered mental torment lest he be misjudged, lest he be unfair, lest he cause unhappiness or embarrassment to any woman. Remember, he was a man's man, master in any contest, physical or mental, with those of his own sex. But with women, he was on strange ground—cautious, indecisive, torn by a complexity of unfamiliar emotions.

* * *

No one knows how many he may have looked on with appraising eye and rushing, tumbling thoughts between the time he left home, at twenty-one, and the day he was married, at thirty-three. But we know of three who had a deep and lasting influence on his life.

Tradition tells us that the first was Ann Rutledge. She was a beautiful girl, with auburn hair and blue eyes; cultured, by comparison with others in the village, and, above

all, the most expert in the arts of the needle. At seventeen she had been betrothed to a young man by the name of James McNamar, who had come to Illinois to make his fortune and then had gone back East pledging her he would soon return. As the months passed his letters came less frequently, and finally ceased. Lincoln was postmaster at the time and knew all about this fading correspondence. So did the whole village, for that matter, and Ann's friends began to tell her she had been deserted.

Then Lincoln came to board at the Rutledge Tavern. He saw Ann every day; they became friends; he took her to quilting parties, to the singing school. Daily their attachment grew stronger, and he proposed an engagement. She consented, on condition that she could obtain her release from McNamar. The slow-moving mails carried her letter to New York. Weeks passed, but no answer came. It is said that, urged on by family and friends, she accepted Lincoln's proposal and they were betrothed.

At once he was seized with fear that he had done her an injustice. He told her he was poverty itself, that they must wait until he had completed his law studies, paid his debts. Ann Rutledge might have waited for Abraham Lincoln, but time would not wait for her. That very summer she was taken with a fever, and she grew steadily worse, until all hope was abandoned for her recovery. Her own brother relates that, though the doctor had forbidden visitors, she called for Lincoln. He came, the door was closed, and they spent a last hour together. What vows, what revelations were made, no one will ever know.

But the death of Ann Rutledge cast a long shadow across Abraham Lincoln's path. A week later he was found rambling in the woods. He walked the riverbank in the deepest

despondency. For weeks he scarcely spoke to anyone. Friends finally persuaded him to stay for a time at the home of Bowling and Nancy Green, a mile to the south of town. There he husked corn, cut wood, picked apples, dug potatoes, held the yarn for Nancy as she spun. Slowly a certain self-control was regained, and he returned to the routine of the store, the post office, the law books and the legislature. But there seems to be no doubt that melancholy had marked him for its own. The memory of that first tragic romance he carried all his life.

* * *

Now, if Lincoln's romance with Ann Rutledge was touched with tragedy, surely his affair with Mary Owens had its elements of comedy. Just a year had passed. It was August, 1836, and the good women of the village of New Salem decided that Lincoln needed a wife. Furthermore, Mrs. Bennett Abell decided to do something about it.

Some years before, her sister, Mary Owens, had come for a visit, and Lincoln and the other young men in the village had been conscious of Mary's charms. Now Mrs. Abell told Lincoln that she herself was going to Kentucky, and she proposed to bring her sister back, on condition that Lincoln should marry her. And Lincoln, surely half in jest, said that *if* she came and *if* he didn't marry her it wouldn't be his fault.

Well, she came. New Salem had never seen such a commanding figure of a woman. One of the townfolk who watched her as she walked down the street that first day said she was tall, handsome, portly, and (to quote him exactly), "She wore the finest trimmings I ever saw!"

But there was a bargain at stake! She had returned to New Salem to marry Abraham Lincoln and he had promised to marry her! To him now the matter was deadly serious. He

proposed almost at once—but she did not immediately accept him. He seemed to have changed. She wondered whether he was the man to make her happy. She found him thoughtless in small matters—an almost fatal shortcoming. They quarrelled. He saw her once or twice, then went to Vandalia for the session of the legislature. From December to March he did not see her at all.

That spring the capitol was moved to Springfield, and from there in May he wrote her—a strange letter of renewed proposal. He pointed out all the hardships that life with him would mean in his meager circumstances. It was a dark, despondent letter, and having given her the best of reasons for not marrying him, he asked her to do so. She refused. Then suddenly he was sure he cared for her above all women. He had thought her too eager to marry him! Now he himself was all eagerness to marry her, distraught at his bungling of his great chance for happiness. Again and again she refused him, and finally she returned to Kentucky.

How much she loved him, how much he loved her—we shall never know. Had this been for him a battle of wits with a man, he would have come off the victor. But Mary Owens was a woman—a calm, calculating woman—and he was unskilled in the tender arts of courtship.

* * *

In December, 1839, a great ball had been arranged in Springfield for the members of the legislature. Everyone of any importance in Springfield was there—Lincoln, of course, and Douglas, and the well-to-do Ninian W. Edwards and Mrs. Edwards; and, most important of all, Mrs. Edwards' younger sister, Mary Todd, from Kentucky. And only a moment after Mary Todd made her entrance, the center of all eyes, it was plain that she was to be the belle of the ball. She might have

stepped right out of a Godey print—plump, vivacious, with chestnut hair and gleaming blue eyes, a brooch on her bosom and a changeable taffeta dress floating out over hoops and half a dozen starched and flounced white petticoats. She was vivid, quick, radiant.

Late in the evening she asked her cousin, Major John T. Stuart, why a group of men were gathered in one corner of the room. He told her the center of that group was his law partner, Abraham Lincoln, who was such a great story-teller that some of the young men would rather listen to his stories than dance. She commanded that he be brought to her and properly introduced. Forthwith it was done, and Lincoln stood holding her small soft hand in his strong palm. Perhaps that was one of the critical moments of his life, for almost at once they were in love with each other. In the weeks that followed, there were plenty of suitors for that same small hand—Stephen A. Douglas among them. Once, after both had courted her, she was asked which one she intended to marry, and she answered: "The one that has the best chance to be President." Perhaps, then, ambition swayed her, along with intuitive foresight, for she chose Lincoln and they became engaged.

It was a strange match—opposed by her own family because the two were so utterly different, coming from different social classes. She was a triumph of cultivation; he a wild growth of a frontier. And those differences clashed. They quarrelled and made up. They irritated each other, yet always seemed drawn again together. She loved society, he was absorbed in law and politics. So, she flirted with others and was resentful when it did not make him jealous. Once they parted so bitterly that he decided to release her. He wrote it all out in a letter, told her they had made a mistake that had best be

corrected now. But his friend Joshua Speed, to whom he showed it, threw it into the fire and told him to go himself and tell her of his decision. He went—and before the evening was over was holding her in his arms. He came back and told Speed, "Well, I'm in again. So be it. It's done and I shall abide by it."

Thus the romance ran its uneven course until New Year's Day, 1841. Then something happened—nobody knows just what. Some said that plans for the wedding were made, that the bride and the wedding cake were ready in the Edwards' home, that the groom never came. Some claimed the wedding was never really planned, that Lincoln simply broke the engagement. Lincoln himself spoke of it afterward as the "fatal" day. In the two months following he missed roll-call in the legislature only seven times. He tried law cases and occasionally saw political friends, but he moved about Springfield like a haunted man. He was torn with torment because he had failed a woman. Which was the greater injury—to have failed her at the altar or to have committed her to an unhappy marriage? So he brooded. He wrote his law partner: "I am the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed over the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth."

That spring, Speed sold his store and returned to Kentucky. Lincoln visited with him and remained with his friend until he regained some composure of mind and spirit. But for more than a year after that fatal January 1, he did not see or write to Mary Todd.

One of Lincoln's warmest personal friends was Simeon Francis, editor of the *Sangamo Journal,* and Mrs. Francis was the self-appointed matchmaker of Springfield. She honestly felt there was a need for someone to guide and encourage

young people to their matrimonial destiny. In this spirit she undertook to repair the shattered romance of Lincoln and Mary Todd. She brought them together at her house without either knowing the other was to be present. And she did it without the knowledge of the Edwards family. These clandestine meetings became more frequent and more cordial. Out of them developed one of the most curious incidents of Lincoln's whole life.

Mary Todd's closest friend was Julia M. Jayne. The three conspired in a prank to ridicule James Shields, Auditor General of the State, through some anonymous letters in the *Sangamo Journal.* They really sought to deflate Shields' pompous manners. But Shields was a picturesque, volatile, courageous, belligerent Irishman, and he failed to find amusement in the taunting letters. When he demanded the name of the writer, Lincoln directed the editor to protect the girls, of course, and to name him as the sole author. Shields at once demanded a retraction, or satisfaction under a gentleman's code. Lincoln declined to apologize and named cavalry broadswords, the duel to be fought in the early morning on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River.

The two parties went separately to the scene, and their seconds conferred. A friend who accompanied them says: "I watched Lincoln closely while he sat on a log waiting for the signal to fight. His face was serious. I never knew him to go so long without making a joke. Then he reached over and picked up one of the sabers, felt its edge with his thumb, as a barber feels a razor, raised himself to his full height, stretching out his long arm, and with a gigantic swing clipped off a twig high above his head. He then returned the sword to its scabbard and sat down, but I detected a gleam in his eye." Possibly this demonstration had its effect, for the absurdity of

a duel with such weapons, between Lincoln and a man who could have walked under his arm, was obvious. At any rate, the seconds shortly reported that the affair had been settled amicably between them. A crowd had gathered on the Illinois shore to await the return of the duelists. They saw the ferry approach, bearing what appeared to be a profusely bleeding body. But as it came closer, they saw it was a log covered with a red shirt. Lincoln and Shields came off the boat together, chatting and laughing.

Lincoln's fears of matrimony still persisted, but the happy marriage of his friend Speed, possibly more than any other one thing, prompted a sudden decision to renew his proposal to Mary Todd. The wedding was actually arranged on a few hours' notice. Not until late afternoon did he ask James Matheny to be his best man, and that gentleman afterward said that on his own hurried arrival he found Lincoln "looking and acting as if he were going to the slaughter." A week later Lincoln wrote to a friend, "Nothing new here, except my marrying, which to me is a matter of profound wonder."

Abraham and Mary Lincoln began their married life in the Globe Tavern in Springfield, paying four dollars a week for their room and board. They finished their life together in the White House in Washington. Through all those twenty-three years they remained as unlike as they were the night they met at the ball. Always he was patient, easy-going, clear-thinking, hard-reasoning, self-controlled. She was high-strung, nervous, sensitive, jealous. But an authority who has studied the course of their life together writes: "They were not always happy, but each would have been unhappy without the other, and neither would have been happy alone." And Senator Charles Sumner, who remained Mrs. Lincoln's loyal friend through the trying years of her widowhood,

pleading again and again with a hostile Congress to grant her a modest pension, said in an impassioned appeal to the Senate: "She loved him. I speak of that which I know. He had all her love. And Lincoln loved as only his mighty heart *could* love—Mary Lincoln."

Let us believe that he did. For his heart was tender toward all women. During the war, women besieged his office with appeals on behalf of husbands, brothers, sons. They pleaded for pardons, begged him to return to their arms boys caught in the cruel, terrible tangle of war. And almost never could he say no, when the one who entreated was a woman. The sound of a mother's sobs outside his door moved him to mercy when he was deaf to the pleas of senators and high officials of the government. To Mrs. Bixby, who was reported to have lost five sons in the war, he sent one of the most beautiful letters of sympathy ever written.

* * *

So through Lincoln's life ran the shining thread of remembrance of the women he loved: Nancy Hanks Lincoln, who held him close in her last hour and told her son always to be kind; Sarah Bush Lincoln, who guided him, helped him, encouraged him, understood him in the years of his youth; Ann Rutledge, who taught him that love could be tragedy; Mary Owens, who taught him that love could be a game; and Mary Todd—ambitious, courageous, loyal Mary Todd.

These were the women who made his life sometimes complex and confused, sometimes inexpressibly sad, sometimes more beautiful than this cabin-born boy had ever dreamed it could be. These were the women who planted a tree of tenderness and kept it forever green, in the heart of Abraham Lincoln—a man among men.

LINCOLN AND HIS CABINET

FIVE EVENTS—only remotely related in time and place—made Abraham Lincoln president. Not all his qualities of character—his persuasive eloquence—his political sagacity—not all of these could have placed Lincoln at the head of the nation in its greatest hour of peril, had not chance circumstances fashioned themselves into a pattern to make him seemingly a man of destiny.

What were they? . . . An invitation to deliver a lecture for a fee of $200. The failure of a young man to pass his entrance examinations at Harvard. A sudden sense of showmanship by a politician in Decatur, Illinois. The failure of a printer to keep his promise. And, finally, a midnight political conspiracy in a hotel room.

If all this seems incongruous—at variance with history as we commonly accept it—let us look at events veiled *then* by the surface excitement of political turmoil and dimmed *now* by the passage of time—and let us remember "God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform."

Thus, we shall discover not only how Lincoln really rose to power, but how it happened that he gathered around him the most amazing cabinet that ever served a President of the United States.

First, let us look in on a disappointed and discouraged man sitting in a shabby law office in Springfield, Illinois. It was the fall of 1859. Lincoln was fifty years old. For more than thirty years he had been practicing law on the circuit. His average annual income had amounted to about $3,000, though in the late 'fifties, his firm had received a few substantial fees. His worldly possessions consisted of the house in which he lived, 160 acres of land in Crawford and Tama Counties, Illinois, and some lots and a little acreage near Council Bluffs, Iowa, taken on a note. His cash resources were meager and he placed a low estimate on his credit, for a few months later he wrote, "I could not raise ten thousand dollars if it would save me from the fate of John Brown."

During this fall of 1859, some of his associates were beginning to talk about him as a candidate for the presidency. He met these suggestions with deprecation. He asked why the Republican party should consider him when it had such conspicuous leaders as William H. Seward, of New York, and Salmon P. Chase of Ohio. Yet he confessed to an ambition to be President and curiously enough turned to the lecture platform, perhaps as a means of keeping himself before the public and with some hope of supplementing his income. Because the invitation brought both opportunities, he was the more interested in an offer of $200 and his expenses to appear on a lecture course at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn. The offer appealed to him for another reason. It would enable him to go East and see his son, Robert, who had gone to Cambridge that fall, expecting to enter Harvard. To do so,

Robert was required to pass entrance examinations in sixteen subjects—and he had failed in fifteen of them. When this news was reported to his parents, they wrote him not to return home but to go to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, to complete his preparations. Lincoln was now anxious about Robert's progress, and he seized upon the lecture engagement as a means of affording the visit.

After arrangements had been made for Lincoln's appearance at Plymouth Church, the lyceum people learned that he was to speak on a political subject and they changed the meeting place to Cooper Union, in New York, in the hope of handling a larger crowd. Although the night of February 27 was stormy, about 1500 people came, and at twenty-five cents admission, the door receipts amounted to $367.00. With William Cullen Bryant as chairman, the audience represented, according to report, the "intellect and moral culture" of New York. They had been hearing more and more of this lanky lawyer from the West, and they were curious to see him.

Even Lincoln's best friends were fearful of the impression he would make. "But," writes one who heard him, "he held the vast meeting spellbound by his logic, and at the close the audience broke into wild and prolonged enthusiasm."

Next day the New York papers carried the address in full, with the result that Republican leaders throughout New England urgently appealed to Lincoln to speak along the route of his visit to Exeter. In the week that followed, he delivered eleven addresses in Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Hampshire, and made an impression that cannot be overestimated in considering the events that followed. Robert Lincoln always maintained that if he had failed in fewer than fifteen subjects in his preparation for his Harvard examinations, his father might have been less concerned about him,

might not have visited New York and New England that winter, and might never have become President of the United States.

Let us return now to Springfield with a Lincoln who felt for the first time that his nomination for President was within the realm of possibility. Seward, the outstanding popular Republican leader, with great prestige throughout the country, was already strong in Illinois. So Lincoln began writing to influential party workers throughout the State. He knew that unless he could go into the National Convention with his own State delegates, his cause was hopeless.

He wrote, for example, to Norman B. Judd, northern Illinois member of the Republican National Committee, asking, "Can you help me a little in your end of the vineyard?" Judd managed so well that he obtained the National Convention for Chicago.

Lincoln had another warm friend and supporter in Richard J. Oglesby, of Decatur, who had a sense of showmanship rare in the frontier country of the 'sixties. The State Convention was to be held at Decatur, and Oglesby's aim was to rally the delegates to pledge the State to Lincoln.

Oglesby had heard that only a short distance from Decatur, Lincoln, in his youth, had split rails with John Hanks, who still lived in the vicinity. Oglesby went to Hanks and asked him whether any of the rails they had split were still in existence. Hanks said he remembered well a fence they had built on a farm ten miles west of town, with rails split from locust and black-walnut logs. So Oglesby took old John Hanks in his buggy and drove to the farm, and there they found the rail fence still in service. Hanks tested the rails with his pocketknife to prove them genuine, and showed that they were locust and black walnut. Then they took two of the rails,

lashed them to the buggy, carried them back into Decatur, and hid them in Oglesby's barn. A week later, at a strategic moment in the convention, Oglesby rose and announced that a former Democrat desired to make a contribution. Whereupon, old John Hanks appeared upon the stage, carrying the rails that he and Lincoln had split in 1830. They bore a large sign:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
THE RAIL-SPLITTER
CANDIDATE
FOR PRESIDENT IN 1860

The convention went wild. The Seward forces were snowed under. Then and there, Illinois went on record for Lincoln. Not only that—John Hanks and his rails became a feature at political gatherings everywhere. "Abe Lincoln, the Rail-Splitter" became a national political slogan.

But two more of our fateful events in this play of destiny had still to happen:

The Republican Convention met and organized at Chicago on Wednesday, May 16, 1860. On Thursday, the platform was adopted. That evening the candidate was to be nominated. There seemed no possible doubt of the result. Seward was the outstanding choice. Straw votes taken among the passengers on four trains entering the city showed Seward with 860, Lincoln 144, all others 288. The vote of the delegates seemed merely a formality. And had it been taken that Thursday evening, Seward would certainly have been nominee and President.

Put it another way. If a printer had kept his promise, Lincoln might never have been President. Tally sheets had been ordered and delivery promised by nine o'clock. At that hour, they had not come. There were no telephones, remember. So, after a while, messengers were sent to search for the messenger. In half an hour, they had not returned. The delegates were growing restless, and at last two of them asked that the convention adjourn until ten o'clock the following morning. The motion carried. Thus two obscure figures, otherwise unknown to fame, became instruments of destiny. For the hours of that night were to see the course of history changed.

When the convention had been adjourned until morning, Lincoln's friends went feverishly to work. They promoted the proposition that if Seward were nominated he could not carry Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois, and without at least two of those States and New Jersey, the Republican cause would be lost. This argument was effective with many wavering delegates. But whole blocks, not single votes, were necessary—and the night was passing. In separate hotel rooms, two of Lincoln's political managers were dickering for State delegations. Lincoln, one hundred and fifty miles away in Springfield, must have suspected what was happening, for he sent them a message of six words: "Do nothing that will bind me." The bargainers were astounded. Wrathful at first, they made a swift decision: "We'll make believe we never got it." And, between then and dawn, they drove two bargains. On their pledge of two posts in the cabinet, Pennsylvania and Indiana agreed to vote for Lincoln.

Next morning when the convention met, Seward led strongly on the first ballot while many State delegations cast their votes for favorite sons. On the second, Pennsylvania and Indiana led the swing to Lincoln. On the fourth, Ohio

joined them, and the battle was over. Of 466 votes on the final ballot, 354 were cast for Lincoln.

Thus, a strange series of unrelated events conspired to bring about a result of profound importance. But was it an accident? Was it political intrigue? Was it human frailty? . . . Or was it fate? Is it not just possible that that momentous day the hand of Destiny rested upon the shoulder of Abraham Lincoln?

For the campaign, the Democrats, hopelessly divided on the question of slavery, produced three candidates. The northern Democrats nominated Douglas; the pro-slavery wing, Breckinridge; the new Constitutional Union party, John Bell. It was a common saying at the time that Douglas was a greater man than Lincoln; for while Lincoln had split rails, Douglas had split the Democratic party. In November, with forty per cent of the popular vote, Lincoln was elected to the Presidency.

Picture now the circumstances under which Lincoln was about to assume office. He was the successful candidate of a patch-work party only six years old, a party made up of former Whigs and antislavery Democrats and Free-Soilers and Liberty Men, widely at variance in political beliefs except for their devotion to the abolition of slavery and the preservation of the Union. Lincoln saw the urgent need of action that would weld together the sectional elements of the party. He determined on a course courageous but fraught with danger. He decided to invite into his cabinet the very rivals who had so vigorously opposed him, and thus unite, if possible, the clearly marked divisions of Republican policy.

William H. Seward he invited to be Secretary of State.

Salmon P. Chase, Ohio's favorite son, he appointed Secretary of the Treasury.

Edward Bates, Missouri's favorite son, he made Attorney General.

Montgomery Blair, who had led Maryland's delegation at the convention, he made Postmaster General.

And now he faced payment of those political promissory notes that his bargaining managers had issued in Chicago. He resented them; he inwardly protested them; but he kept faith. He made Simon Cameron, of Pennsylvania, Secretary of War; and Caleb Smith, of Indiana, Secretary of the Interior.

The one remaining appointment was left, by tradition, for the Vice-President to designate, and he chose Gideon Welles, of Connecticut, for Secretary of the Navy.

So Lincoln took up the task of attempting to govern a dismembered nation, with a cabinet composed largely of his recent rivals and with the doubtful support of a divided party. How truly he spoke, when, on departing from Springfield, he said to his friends, "I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington."

The minor members of that cabinet—Blair and Smith and Bates—we can promptly dismiss. But three of that strange group—and one who later joined them—were to have their names inseparably associated with Lincoln's in the pages of history. The manner in which Lincoln won them to him, inspired their support, drew upon their great abilities, provides the strongest proof of his quality as a leader of men.

Seward had had a brilliant political career. He had twice served in the New York Legislature, had twice been Governor of New York, and he was then serving his second term in the Senate. He was an untiring student of history and literature, an able statesman, a man of supreme self-confidence. He felt keenly that the turn of events had robbed him of the presi-

dency. He had little or no confidence in Lincoln; and, when he accepted the appointment as Secretary of State, he wrote to Mrs. Seward: "It is inevitable. I will try to save freedom and my country."

Seward's attitude toward the South was one of conciliation. Lincoln's was one of firm determination to preserve the Union at all costs. And not an hour was to pass before the issue was drawn between them. As he entered the executive offices after the inaugural ceremonies, the President was handed a message from Major Anderson. Provisions must be sent to Fort Sumter at once or the fort must be evacuated. Seward favored evacuation; he went so far as to assure the Confederate Commissioners then in Washington that the fort would be abandoned. Lincoln patiently overruled him, forgave the unwarranted assurances, and ordered reinforcements. This was the first of almost daily differences between them.

Seward repeatedly wrote to his wife that conditions in the cabinet were intolerable, that Lincoln was leading the nation to disaster, that eventually the heavy mantle of responsibility must fall on him. And on April 1, 1861, less than a month after the inauguration, Seward laid upon Lincoln's desk the famous memorandum entitled, "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration."

The mad daring of this proposal would have been worthy of Napoleon. It was the most extraordinary document ever prepared for a President by a member of his cabinet. Seward proposed that the public interest be directed from the issue of slavery to that of union, and that, if necessary, it be done by plunging the whole Western Hemisphere into a war with Europe. Of Spain, France, England, and Russia, he would demand explanations of their seeming interest in the Confederacy; in the absence of satisfactory explanations, he would

convene Congress, declare war on these countries, and, at the same time, dispatch agitators to Canada, Mexico, and Central and South America to arouse sentiment against European intervention. "But whatever policy we adopt," he wrote, "there must be an energetic prosecution of it. Either the President must do it . . . or . . . some member of his Cabinet. It is not my especial province, but I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility."

What would Lincoln do? Before the day was over, Lincoln's answer was in Seward's hands. "The policy of this Administration," he wrote, with great restraint, "you will find in the Inaugural Address. What is to be done, *I* must do." No mention of the fantastic scheme of foreign wars; no reference to the tactless attempt of his Secretary to ascend the throne of power. The amazing memorandum itself he filed away among his personal papers. And there it remained until years afterward, when, both Lincoln and Seward having passed from the scene, Lincoln's secretaries, Nicolay and Hay, published the memorandum to an astonished world.

From that day on, Seward never again sought to usurp the President's power. He gave, to the limit of his ability, a service which Lincoln all the while had recognized and sought to inspire. Gradually Seward himself came to see clearly Lincoln's greatness of heart and mind and leadership. Not many weeks after the fateful episode of April 1, we find him again writing to his wife: "The President is the best man among us."

Salmon P. Chase had been Lincoln's other potent rival for the nomination at Chicago. Geographically closer to Illinois, he knew more of Lincoln and had sympathized with him in his campaign against Douglas; but he was scarcely prepared for the party's selection of Lincoln instead of himself for the

presidency, and he accepted the appointment as Secretary of the Treasury only as a public duty, that he might help to correct what he conceived to be a tragic political error.

He was a man supremely equipped for the great task. Physically he was an imposing figure, and his stately presence was reinforced by a mind as vigorous as it was cultivated. But his strongly chiseled features invariably wore an expression of rigid reserve, and the light of humor seldom shone in his cold gray eyes. He had no tolerance for Lincoln's unconventional ways—they grated upon his dignity. He was shocked by the President's stories, often told in cabinet meetings to relieve the mental strain. He simply did not know his chief, and, as a result, shortly fell into the error of disparagement. He endeavored to undermine the President's confidence in Seward. He wrote directly to military leaders, criticizing the Administration's policies, and he soon acquired the habit of resigning upon every occasion of disagreement—confident that the President would decline to accept—thus making himself increasingly appear to be the indispensable man.

In 1864, Chase gave vent to his boldest expression of hostility. As the time for the Republican Convention approached, he began to scatter seeds of discontent with Lincoln and to advance in every possible way his own candidacy. His one great ambition was to be President. Once aflame in his being, the "White House fever," as Lincoln once called it, had never subsided. Not until State after State had pledged its delegates to the President and the character of the country's sentiment became unmistakable, did Chase withdraw.

Not long after that, however, he insisted upon a certain appointment, and, when the President overruled him, again presented his resignation. This time, to his surprise, it was promptly accepted. In his diary Chase entered that day a

naïve comment: "I had found," he wrote, "a great deal of embarrassment from the President, but what he had found from me I cannot imagine."

Somehow Chase had failed to see that, through all these heart-breaking years, Lincoln had been willing to make any sacrifice of pride, to suffer any indignity, if only Chase's great abilities might be continuously applied to his difficult post at the Treasury. How deeply Lincoln appreciated those great services and how immeasurably he towered above the Secretary who had persistently opposed him, he demonstrated before the year was out by nominating Chase as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

During the early months of Lincoln's administration, no critic outside the cabinet had been more bitter than Edwin M. Stanton. Stanton, a Democrat, had been Attorney General in the Buchanan cabinet and there had demonstrated his great ability. But he looked upon Lincoln's rise to the presidency as a national disaster.

After the Battle of Bull Run, Stanton wrote to Buchanan: "The imbecility of this administration culminated in that catastrophe; and irretrievable misfortune and national disgrace, never to be forgotten, are to be added to the ruin of all peaceful pursuits and national bankruptcy, as the result of Lincoln's 'running the machine' for five months."

Yet, in January, 1862, ten months after Lincoln's inauguration, Stanton was invited to become Secretary of War. Simon Cameron had been utterly unequal to the task. A strong man was needed; and Lincoln, seeking only ability and willing to overlook personalities, saw in Stanton the qualities required for the War Department's tremendous responsibility.

Stanton accepted with supreme confidence in himself and no lessening of his contempt for Lincoln. He, too, looked

upon the call to duty solely as a personal obligation to save the country.

It is doubtful whether any act of Lincoln's caused more amazement among Republicans than his selection of Stanton for the War Office. His friends warned him that Stanton would give him no end of trouble, that he would run away with the whole concern. But Lincoln showed no signs of alarm.

No one knew and understood better than Lincoln the great problems with which his War Secretary had to contend, and no one was more ready to sustain him in his struggles to maintain the effectiveness of the army.

"Stanton," he said, "is the rock upon which are beating the waves of this conflict . . . I do not see how he survives—why he is not crushed and torn to pieces. Without him, I should be destroyed."

It was the President's unfailing support in every crisis that broke down Stanton's antagonism. Gradually he came to know the real Lincoln, and as the months went by, contempt vanished, respect replaced it, and, at last, a real affection.

But the burden Stanton carried wore down even his rugged health; and early in 1865, when Lee's surrender seemed near, Stanton asked permission to retire. Lincoln, in a burst of emotion, threw his arms about the other and said, "Stanton, you have been a good friend and a faithful servant. It is not for you to say how long the country needs you." So Stanton remained at his post long after the victory was won.

And let us not forget that other cabinet figure who through four terrible years labored with a devoted loyalty to his great chief and the cause of the Union. It was Gideon Welles, a Hartford newspaper editor, who built a navy which flung a blockade 3,000 miles long, from Maryland to Mexico, and,

by its ceaseless, throttling vigilance, decreed that, however long the war might last, the cause of the South must fail. He rendered another service, too, that will grow in importance with the passing years. Each night he set down his personal record of each day's events, and left us, in *The Diary of Gideon Welles,* the true, inspiring, illuminating story of Lincoln and his cabinet.

And there he tells of the three who still remained that fateful night in April, 1865, when a cry in the dark and a knock at the door roused him to the reality of that awful night's work. Hurrying first to Seward's home, he found the great Secretary of State lying near death from the attack of a would-be assassin. Then, with Stanton, Welles hastened to the little house in Tenth Street where the still greater tragedy was drawing to its close. There the faithful two remained until the end. And when, at twenty-two minutes past seven, Abraham Lincoln died, and there was a prayer and a solemn pause, Stanton's voice broke the stillness with the words: "Now he belongs to the ages."

* * *

A chain of circumstances? Perhaps! But, if so, a chain whose links were joined by unseen hands. For possibly—just possibly —One with a vision beyond the realm of mortal men had looked long, long before into a Kentucky cabin, and had chosen there a child of destiny. Perhaps the knowing spirit had followed that frontier boy along the river and forest trails, had watched while he struggled through years of hardship and discouragement and despair, until at last it called him for the supreme task, surrounded him with strange yet heroic figures, and endowed him with the power to win their support in his great purpose—the saving of the Union.

LINCOLN AND HIS GENERALS

On March 4, 1861, when Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States, the national government had degenerated into chaos. Buchanan had sat for months, helpless and effortless in the White House, while national unity crumbled about him. Seven of the southern States already had seceded.

Lincoln had one overwhelming desire—to save the Union. But how? By reason? By persuasion? Too late for that. By military force? With *what?* Except for the minor war with Mexico, the United States had been at peace with the world for almost half a century. Under the command of ill and aging General Winfield Scott, the entire army consisted of only 16,000 men.

But the die was cast. On April 12, with the bombardment of Fort Sumter, the war was on, and on the 15th, the President issued to the States a call for 75,000 volunteers. Three days later Virginia seceded from the Union, and now the shore of the Potomac directly opposite Washington was

enemy territory. Standing at the south window of his White House study, Lincoln could see the Confederate Flag flying from its staff at Alexandria—a day-long taunt to the government, a symbol of Virginia's proud rebellion.

By the middle of May, troops in considerable number had arrived in Washington, and on the 23rd they crossed the Potomac and took the immediate south shore with little opposition.

The North was eager for a march on Richmond. General Scott said the army was not ready, but after two months' delay, he directed General McDowell to attack the enemy at Manassas Junction on Bull Run Creek.

This was the first great battle of the war. If successful, it might mean quick suppression of the rebellion. It was Sunday, and Lincoln went to church, as usual. That afternoon, reports were so encouraging that the President went for a drive, confident of victory. But at six o'clock the terrible news came: "The day is lost—McDowell is in full retreat—save Washington."

All was now changed. Visions of a quick victory faded away. The Union now needed men and more men. These the States could supply. It needed money. This Congress could supply. But above all, it needed a commander—a man who could whip men and materials into an effective fighting force and direct that force to victory. Where was he to be found? Where *would* a brilliant military leader be found in a country so long at peace?

From Ohio came stories of a dashing young figure who seemed to have been born under the star of this very destiny. He was George B. McClellan—a West Point graduate who had served in the Mexican War, had resigned from the army in 1857, and was now a railroad president. At the outbreak

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of the war, Ohio had summoned him to command the volunteers of Cincinnati, and in the month that followed, he had led his men into western Virginia and had won a series of skirmishes. Then, an eloquent orator, he had told the stories of his victories in a series of speeches that thrilled the North—hungry for a hero. As tales of his fame reached Washington, Lincoln, urged on by his advisors, summoned McClellan to take command of the demoralized Army of the Potomac, rebuild it, enlarge it, and with it strike a decisive blow.

McClellan appeared to be the perfect choice for this great responsibility. His every word and gesture showed his supreme self-confidence. He accepted his sudden fame as evidence that he had been called for a great purpose, and after being on duty in Washington just one day, he wrote to his wife: "By some strange magic I seem to have become the power of the land. Who would have thought when we were married, that I should so soon be called to save my country."

Lincoln was so eager for a military leader that he placed great hopes in McClellan—showered him with attention. To the autocratic young Napoleon, the President's homely, friendly manners were merely the mark of an inferior man. McClellan failed utterly to understand him—grew resentful of what he considered meddling with his own plans, and finally was expressing in letters to his wife only contempt for the Chief Executive. "I can't tell you," he wrote, "how disgusted I am with these wretched politicians."

Lincoln made it a practice to drop in frequently at McClellan's headquarters, and John Hay, the President's secretary, tells how one evening they made such a call and were informed that McClellan was out and would soon return. Lincoln decided to wait for him, and a little later he saw McClellan come in and go upstairs. Thinking that the general

might not know of his presence, he sent up word by an orderly. The message came back that McClellan had gone to bed.

Even in the face of such an insult, Lincoln showed no displeasure. All his hopes were centered in McClellan's supposed brilliance as a military leader. Once, when McClellan failed to attend a conference, and others present showed their irritation, Lincoln said: "Never mind, I'll hold McClellan's horse if he will only win victories."

Meanwhile, the new army, drilled and equipped under McClellan's skillful direction, lingered in the camps around Washington. The North was clamoring for another advance, but McClellan insisted he was not ready. September, October, November slipped by—then General Scott resigned, and McClellan, still the popular hero, was appointed commander of all the Union armies. But December was another month of drills and parades, of innumerable demands for more money, for more supplies, for more men.

McClellan now had at his command an army of 164,000—the largest army ever at the disposal of a commander in the Western Hemisphere. Yet, to all appearances, this vast army was preparing to spend the winter in the idle luxury of the capital. Most serious of all, this delay was giving the South, under Lee's superb direction, time to build its army and perfect the South's defense.

In late December, McClellan was taken ill of typhoid fever and confined to his bed for three long weeks. And then it was that there must have come to Lincoln's mind the memory of a time and an event long, long ago in Illinois: Lincoln had been splitting rails in the woods when a neighbor came to say that the county surveyor needed a deputy, and would like to offer Lincoln the appointment. Lincoln went immedi-

ately to Springfield and explained that he wanted the position but that he did not know enough about surveying. Assured that he would be given time to learn, he obtained the best available books on this intricate subject. Then he went to work, literally devoting his days and nights to intensive study. He grew haggard from sleepless hours and overwork, but in six weeks he had mastered a subject which ordinarily could scarcely be learned in as many months.

Now, with a great, idle army sprawled over the capital, its procrastinating commander lying in the hospital, the North clamoring for action, and his own problems multiplying with each new day, Lincoln realized that after all, *he* was Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, and he determined that, as such, he was going to cease depending entirely on temperamental generals; he was going to learn something of military strategy himself. From the beginning of the war he had pored over maps and charts and battle plans, but this was something different. He obtained the best textbooks on strategy. To them he applied all his great powers of concentration. Night after night he studied with the zeal of the young would-be surveyor, but stirred to new heights now by the fateful urgency of a need affecting not merely the boundaries of a pioneer's claim, but the salvation of the Union.

And on January 31, 1862, as McClellan returned to duty, he received to his amazement "The President's General War Order No. 1." Specifically, it directed that "the 22nd day of February, 1862, be the day for a general movement of the land and naval forces of the United States," and it outlined the plan of attack.

McClellan protested. He had a thousand-and-one reasons for delay. The enemy, he said, far outnumbered his forces. He needed now, not 164,000 men but 208,000. The proposed

route was wrong. He would attack differently. He belittled the President's strategy.

Lincoln yielded on the plan of the campaign, but at last McClellan was forced into the field. He spent the month of March in final preparation, all of May and June in working his way cautiously toward Richmond. He constantly appealed to the President for more troops, and Lincoln supplied them; but a few miles from the Southern capital, when he met disastrous defeat, McClellan telegraphed angrily, "If I had 10,000 fresh troops, I could gain the victory tomorrow."

The failure of this campaign was a terrible blow to the President. He said afterward to a friend, "When it ended, I was as nearly inconsolable as I could be, and live."

McClellan claimed he now had only 50,000 men. "I need 50,000 more," he telegraphed, "and with them I will retrieve our fortunes."

Lincoln now decided to see for himself, and accompanied by the Secretary of War, he proceeded to McClellan's headquarters. They found that the 50,000 needed men had somehow unaccountably become 86,000, and McClellan admitted that 34,000 of his men were on leave by his own authority.

Afterward, Lincoln said to Stanton, "Sending men to that army is like trying to shovel fleas across a barnyard." Stanton was far more bitter. "If McClellan had a million men," he said, "he would claim that the enemy had two million, and would sit down in the mud and yell for three million."

By August the swelling chorus of complaint against McClellan was dinning in the ears of the President. Still Lincoln stood by him. There were reasons. With all his faults, with all his defeats, McClellan held the loyalty of his soldiers. And he was a Democrat—with a powerful following in the North. To remove him might split the support the President

so sorely needed. And the greatest problem of all was to find a successor. He decided to stand by the tarnished young Napoleon for one more campaign.

Lee was now heading north through Maryland. McClellan, sent to attack him, defeated Lee at Antietam, but glorying in his success, permitted Lee to retire across the Potomac, making no effort to destroy his army. To Lincoln this was a hollow victory, the precious chance to end the war lost once more. He urged McClellan, begged him, at last directed him, to cross the river and pursue Lee. McClellan replied that his cavalry horses had sore tongues. Lincoln telegraphed him: "I have just read your dispatch about sore-tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the Battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?"

Lincoln's patience lasted just six weeks more. And then late one November night, in the midst of a driving snow storm, an officer of the War Department handed McClellan this message: "By direction of the President of the United States, it is ordered that Major General McClellan be relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac."

In his place, Lincoln appointed one of McClellan's corps commanders—General Ambrose Burnside. It was the second experiment in the President's search for a general who could win battles. Burnside did not want the appointment; he protested his own unfitness. But with the great responsibility upon his shoulders, he moved to the attack. On December 9, at Fredericksburg, the battle began. When it reached its climax, on the 15th, Lincoln never left the telegraph office, so great was his anxiety. And then the tragic word came—Burnside had withdrawn his army in disastrous defeat, with the loss in killed, wounded and missing, of 12,000 men.

Five weeks was enough to prove that Burnside must be superseded by another. This time the choice was "Fighting Joe" Hooker. He had been a bitter critic, not only of Burnside, but of the Administration in its handling of the war. He had told newspaper men the country needed a dictator, and the sooner it had one, the better. Yet, four days later he was appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac, and into his hands was delivered one of the most famous letters ever written by Abraham Lincoln, a letter that showed how willing he was to make any sacrifice of personal pride if only somewhere, *somewhere* among all these generals, he could find *one* with the courage and the skill to strike vigorously, to press unceasingly for a military victory. Lincoln wrote:

> I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

Not long after, Hooker stood one night with his back to the fire in his log-and-canvas hut and said to Noah Brooks,

a newspaper correspondent, "Let me read you a letter." Then he drew Lincoln's letter from a pocket, read it softly, almost with tears in his eyes, folded it carefully, replaced it in his pocket and said: "That is such a letter as a father might write a son. It is a beautiful letter, and I will say that I love the man who wrote it."

All through February, March, and April of 1863, Hooker planned and prepared for his attack on Lee. On May 1, he struck at Chancellorsville. Lee counter-attacked, and Hooker, to the amazement of his own staff, ordered his men to fall back. Next day, Lee, with an army half the size of Hooker's, out-guessed and outfought the Union Commander until Hooker, in panic, retreated across the Rapahannock River, counting his losses at 17,000 men.

That night in Washington, Noah Brooks watched Lincoln as he read the tragic news. "The appearance of the President," he wrote, "was piteous, broken, ghost-like. Clasping his hands behind his back, he walked up and down the room, saying, 'My God! My God! What will the country say? What will the country say?' He seemed incapable of uttering any other words than these, and after a little time he hurriedly left the room."

Lee now began to move for an invasion of the North, and Lincoln urged Hooker to maneuver against him, advising him day to day on the strategy to be followed. But again weeks slipped by, and Hooker did nothing to interfere with Lee's plans.

The war was now in its third year and the same problem that had haunted Lincoln from its first hour filled his thoughts by day, troubled him by night. He was no novice now in military strategy. In fact, the *Springfield Republican* urged Lincoln himself to take the field. He had a plan for every

campaign. But to find *the man* who saw things as he saw them—to find a man who would strike hard enough to bring this awful conflict to a close—that was his task supreme.

When he heard that Lee had crossed Maryland and was in Pennsylvania, he knew that no longer could he count on Hooker to stop him. Instantly he removed Hooker and placed at the head of the army General George G. Meade. Meade moved at once, and at Gettysburg, on July 2, 3, and 4, defeated Lee in the great battle that marked the high tide of the Confederacy.

Lincoln rejoiced with the whole North at this victory, but in his keen sensing of military strategy he saw at once the need of following Lee's army, of destroying it before it could cross the Potomac and re-form. He urged Meade to pursue the retreating troops, crush them—end the war. Meade replied that his men needed rest. Then Lincoln read Meade's message of congratulation to his troops, closing with the words: "The Commanding General looks to the army for greater efforts to drive from our soil every vestige of the presence of the invader."

When Lincoln read those words he could scarcely believe his eyes. With agonizing impatience he moaned, "Will our generals never get that idea out of their heads? *This whole country is our soil!*"

Impatiently, he urged Meade to delay no longer, to be swift in pursuit of the fleeing rebels. But by noon of July 14, ten days after Gettysburg, the President's worst fears were confirmed. Lee had escaped across the Potomac. "We had them in our grasp!" Lincoln exclaimed. "We had only to reach out our hands and they were ours. And nothing I could say or do would make the army move. If I had gone up there I could have whipped them myself."

So Lincoln reflected, as he paced the rooms of the White House far into the night; as he saw the figures of dead and wounded and missing mount into the hundreds of thousands; as bitter, caustic criticism was heaped upon him; as his burdens grew, and the war wore on through the third long year. He studied his books and his maps and his charts. He knew, oh, *he knew* how this war could be won, if only *somewhere* among all these generals he could find his man.

And then—from out of the West—there began to come word of a man who had been saying little and fighting much. His name was Ulysses S. Grant. A West Point graduate, retired to private life, he had been clerking in a store in Galena, Illinois, when the war began. He had had difficulty in obtaining even the lowest military appointment. But from the start he had done promptly whatever he was asked to do. Lately he had been assigned the task of opening the Mississippi River, to split the Confederacy in two, and he had fought his way down it mile by mile.

Lincoln had met Grant but once; knew little of him; and seeking information, he sent a trusted newspaper reporter, Charles A. Dana, to size up the silent general for him. Dana's letters convinced Lincoln that here was one man who needed no help, no urging. Already he had captured two armies, routed a third. He made no promises beforehand. Often he and his troops would seem to disappear mysteriously for days; then out of the rain and the mud, after skirmishes and long marches and sudden assaults, would come a modest, simple report of a new victory.

When Grant took Vicksburg, then swept the Confederates out of east Tennessee, there was no longer a doubt in Lincoln's mind—here was the man he had been looking for all these years. News of Grant's victories electrified the North, and a

few months later Congress revived solely in his honor the rank of lieutenant general, and the President summoned him to Washington to receive his commission.

He arrived the night of a weekly White House reception and found himself the unwilling center of a great crowd that swirled around him, cheering, yelling, eager to acclaim its new hero. Nothing could have been more foreign to Grant's nature. The crowd insisted that he stand up where he could be seen. And finally, the short, stubby, seedy, stoop-shouldered Grant, in faded, tarnished uniform, mounted a sofa and stood there blushing furiously, sweat pouring down his face. Wrote Noah Brooks: "It was the only mob I ever saw in the White House. While the President himself stood by and watched with pride and new hope gleaming in his tired face, a scared little man standing on a crimson-covered sofa was the idol of the hour." Grant said it was a hotter spot than he had ever known in battle.

Later that night, Grant asked the President what he wanted him to do. Lincoln said: "Take Richmond. Can you do it?" Without a moment's hesitation Grant said, "Yes, if I have the troops." These the President assured him he should have. There was not one word spoken as to what route to Richmond should be chosen. Lincoln knew that here was a general who needed no suggestions from the Commander-in-chief.

After four days in Washington, Grant called on the President to say he must go back West to complete certain arrangements, then he would return to direct the operations in Virginia. "But," said the President, "Mrs. Lincoln is giving a dinner in your honor at the White House tonight."

"I appreciate the honor," said Grant, "but Mrs. Lincoln must excuse me. I must be in Tennessee tomorrow, and time is more important than anything else."

How Lincoln must have rejoiced inwardly to hear such words, after the years he had spent fruitlessly urging procrastinating generals to move against the enemy.

A little later, his plans complete, Grant outlined to Lincoln the great strategy. Five Union armies were to move as one force—four under Meade, Butler, Banks and Sigel, pushing southward, one under Sherman moving in from the west—a giant nutcracker that, finally meeting, must leave the South crushed. Pressure, never-ceasing pressure everywhere, every single available man applied to the tremendous task.

That day, John Hay, the President's secretary, wrote in his diary: "The President has been powerfully reminded of his own suggestions to Hooker—his own plans for victory years before."

It was now the spring of 1864—the fourth year of the war—the fourth year of Lincoln's term. Would he be renominated? There were serious doubts. His critics in the party were bitter in their opposition. They wanted a truly popular candidate—they wanted Grant. Here was a new problem for Lincoln, and it disturbed him deeply. Would Grant accept? Would the glamour of the presidency tempt him from his prosecution of the war? But Grant soon banished all doubts. He said: "I aspire to only one political office. When this war is over I mean to run for Mayor of my home town of Galena, Ilinois, and if elected I intend to have the sidewalk fixed between my house and the depot."

And so it happened that Lincoln again was the Republican candidate, matched against a familiar figure—for the Democrats had chosen as their leader none other than General George B. McClellan. On September 3, Sherman took Atlanta. In the weeks that followed, Grant's great strategy continued to bear the fruits of victory; and the North, its confidence in

the Administration partially restored, re-elected Lincoln for a second term. Now the President could proceed with the completion of his great task.

And so Grant maintained his pressure upon Lee at Richmond while Sherman cut through Georgia to the sea. Slowly but relentlessly, the giant nutcracker closed. The weakening South could no longer withstand the advances now moving in from every side. Steadily its boundaries narrowed, the ring grew smaller, tighter; Sherman now moving north through the Carolinas, Grant pushing harder and harder upon Lee, until at last the news came that Richmond had fallen. On April 9, 1865, four years almost to a day from the bombardment of Fort Sumter, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. Five days later, the war was over.

Four years—nearly three of them years of struggle and sadness and disappointment and defeat—while Lincoln, hating war, wept bitter tears as tens of thousands died while he looked for a general. Then a year of mounting hope as Grant supplied the strong right arm to sustain him in every emergency, applying to the task the courage, the persistence, the skill that Lincoln so sorely craved.

And so history will inseparably link their names forever—Lincoln and Grant. While glamourous figures fell in favor and their stars declined, these two modest, strong, and simple men, out of the frontier West—these two emerged to save a nation divided against itself—to preserve the Union that they loved.

LINCOLN AND THE UNION

SINCE 1864, America has advanced in wealth and prestige to become the most powerful nation on earth. Since 1864, fifteen presidents and countless political leaders have come and gone. Yet, in all those years no American has risen to challenge the grandeur of Abraham Lincoln. The fame of lesser figures fades away, but the stature of Lincoln continues to grow.

That is why, puzzled and harried by problems and issues that sometimes seem insoluble, we so often look back across the years to this man who seemed to have prophetic vision for the land and the people he loved so well, and we ask: "What would Lincoln do?"

Now it is a fairly simple matter to go back through the pages of Lincoln's letters and speeches and State papers and find specific views on questions as real in the 1860's as they are today. But a clearer, surer way is to look for the shining star whose steady light guided him in every great decision of his life. That star was Abraham Lincoln's profound belief

that the most precious thing in life is freedom, that here on this continent had been created a form of government dedicated to the preservation of that freedom; and that this government had its being in the Union and in the Constitution. Preserve the Union under the Constitution and this government of free men would live; lose it, and the cause of liberty was lost, the progress of humanity set back perhaps a thousand years.

This conviction was deep-rooted in Lincoln's philosophy of life and of government. It had its inception when, as a boy in Indiana, he read a book that profoundly stirred his imagination. That book was Weems' *Life of Washington.* Simple as it was, it gave him a vivid picture of a great and understanding leader of men. He saw Washington as a symbol of the never-ending struggle for liberty—giving to the people of a new world their chance to be free. And always afterwards, in village meetings, in the State Legislature, on the stump, on the circuit, in Congress, in the larger field of national politics, he saw that the fight for freedom is never ended—that it is a continuous struggle that, once relaxed, is in critical danger of being lost. He saw in the Constitution and in the Bill of Rights a bulwark of safety which those who loved liberty must strive to protect, and he saw in the Union the nation's greatest bond of strength in a world that knew all too little of this freedom that he loved.

By 1846, when Lincoln was elected to Congress, he was beginning to see clearly that a great conflict lay ahead in America—a conflict then, not of arms, but of ideas. While the lines were forming in terms of slavery or abolition, in terms of extension or restriction of slave territory, he saw that these issues were only the preliminaries to a greater one. He saw threats to the Union itself. To the preservation of

that Union, at whatever cost, he dedicated himself and all the talents he possessed.

Through the early 'fifties, Illinois was a hotbed of political controversy. The southern part of the State was tolerant of slavery; the northern part was increasingly antislavery. Lincoln, at Springfield, the center of conflicting convictions, saw the storm raging about him. And farther to the south and west, along the boundary lines of slave and free States, he saw a greater storm threatening disunity to the whole nation.

Lincoln had been one of the first to recognize that slavery was simply a labor trust. In 1850, all the slaves in the United States were owned by one-tenth of the white families. Most of the three million slaves were owned by thirty-five thousand families, who sought to secure to themselves the profits of the South's great cotton-growing industry. Here was both a vicious restriction of personal liberty and a threat to national union. The small slaveholder had little chance in competition with the large plantation owner, the poor white still less, and the northern laborer chafed under the inequity of a system that enabled a relatively few slave owners to monopolize the labor of a hundred times their own number.

By 1854, the flaming issue was the limitation of slavery in the Territories. To any extension of slavery, Lincoln was unalterably opposed. But he was not considering slavery now on moral grounds. He saw it as a threat to the preservation of the Union. He said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."

The most eloquent exponent of a liberal policy toward slavery was Stephen A. Douglas. Both Lincoln and Douglas had spent the years of their early maturity in central Illinois. Both had sat with the crowd around the stove in Joshua

Speed's store in Springfield, discussing, as was the custom, the issues of the day. Both had been suitors for the hand of Mary Todd. Both had served in the Illinois Legislature.

Then their ways parted, Lincoln continuing with his law practice, and Douglas, a young idol of the Democrats of Illinois, launching forth upon a career of political achievement scarcely if ever equalled in American history. At twenty-three he was in the legislature; at twenty-six he was Secretary of State of Illinois; at twenty-eight, a judge of the Illinois Supreme Court; at thirty, a member of Congress, and at thirty-four a United States Senator. The course of his swiftly ascending star seemed to be leading straight to the presidency. But to attain that goal he was willing to compromise on the supreme and vital question of slavery. To win the presidency, he dared not alienate the South; and so, although in 1848 he had supported the Missouri Compromise, he broke faith with it in 1854 and himself introduced an amendment to the Nebraska Bill providing that the people of that Territory might themselves determine whether it should be "slave" or "free." This shift in his position required an explanation among his constituents and brought him home to Illinois in 1854 to defend his altered views.

Seeking large audiences, Douglas appeared in Springfield October 3, on the opening day of the State Fair and made a speech to an audience that filled the hall of the State House. During the early part of his address, he said, "I understand there is to be a reply to this address, and that Mr. Lincoln, of this city, is to answer me. If this be true, I wish Mr. Lincoln would stand forth." Lincoln announced that he would make his reply the next day. The following evening he took the platform to answer the Douglas challenge—and at that moment emerged into public life never to return to obscurity.

He spoke for three hours, delivering what many consider one of the greatest speeches of his life. A few days later, when Douglas appeared at Peoria, Lincoln answered him there.

Lincoln had made himself the logical contender for Douglas' seat in the Senate. But the party which was to nominate him did not yet exist in the State.

It was in May of 1856 that a motley group of dissatisfied political elements met at Bloomington to organize the Republican party in Illinois, following the pattern of the new party already started in Michigan and Wisconsin. The group included former Whigs and former Democrats. It included Free-Soilers and Abolitionists. It included radicals and conservatives. It was a melting-pot of protest and discontent, out of which was to emerge a political party that, four years later, was to present to the nation its candidate for President of the United States.

Perhaps no such miracle could have occurred had not this first meeting been the scene and the occasion of one of the great political speeches of American history—a speech the more famous because those who heard it were too absorbed in listening to it to report it fully, and thus it became the legendary "lost speech" of Abraham Lincoln.

The meeting was held in an upstairs hall, and Lincoln stopped on the way and bought in a jewelry store his first pair of spectacles. He was forty-seven years old.

After a platform had been adopted and after many speeches had been made dedicating the new party, there were calls for Lincoln, and he rose to address the delegates. He began by reviewing briefly the history of the United States. He deplored the fact that freedom and equality, for which the American Revolution had been fought only eighty years before, already were regarded with contempt by those who

selfishly advanced the interests of slavery. He saw the strife and bloodshed on the Missouri-Kansas border, where free- and slave-State settlers were resorting to arms, as the forerunner of a mighty conflict. To him, the repeal of the Missouri Compromise had opened the way to all the tragedies of disunion. He said it had installed all "the weapons of violence: the bludgeon, the incendiary torch, the death-dealing rifle, the bristling cannon—the weapons of kingcraft, of the Inquisition, of ignorance, of barbarism, of oppression."

Then he told his listeners the mission of this new party. It was to rally all who would restore and save the Union. "Do not mistake," he said, "that the ballot is stronger than the bullet . . . There is both a power and a magic in public opinion. To that let us now appeal."

He was stirred with the zeal of a crusader. Under the spell of his eloquence the group became a unified party, with Lincoln their leader. In the climax of his speech he flung the challenge: "We will say to the southern disunionists, 'We won't go out of the Union, *and you shan't!*' "

After the meeting, the reporter for the *Chicago Democratic Press* wrote to his paper: "Abraham Lincoln made the speech of the occasion. For an hour and a half he held the assemblage spellbound by the power of his argument, the intense irony of his invective, the brilliancy of his eloquence."

And that night one of the delegates said to Henry C. Whitney: "That is the greatest speech ever made in Illinois, and it puts Lincoln on the track for the presidency."

Lincoln was now ready for any audience and any occasion. His great chance for an appeal to the people came in 1858. Now Lincoln and Douglas, for the first time, were matched in a contest for the same high office—that of United States Senator from Illinois.

It was in this campaign that the great debates were held. Never before nor since has there been anything like them in American history—two political leaders proceeding from city to city, discussing in public forum the vital issues of the time. But there was a marked difference between the methods of the two men. Douglas was speaking directly to his audiences. Lincoln, mindful of the coming presidential election, was speaking not only to the people before him, but over and beyond them, to the people of the whole country.

Some of Lincoln's friends became alarmed by his tactics, and warned him that if he was not careful, Douglas would win. "Perhaps he will," Lincoln is said to have replied, "but the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." And he continued his attacks, repeatedly asking Douglas searching questions, and forcing him to take, in his answers, compromising positions that he as persistently sought to avoid. In this method, the foresight of Lincoln was revealed. For, while Douglas won the election, he won it on a basis that cost him the support of the South in the infinitely greater crisis two years later.

The debates with Douglas had made Lincoln well known in the West. Until early 1860, he was little known in the East, but his Cooper Union speech in New York in February of that year, followed by a speaking tour through New England, lifted him to the top rank of Republican leaders. In May, he was nominated in Chicago as the Republican candidate for President. When, in November, he was elected by a minority vote in a four-way contest, the saving of the Union—as a duty and as a burden—settled upon his shoulders.

Remember that Lincoln's first inspiration to public service had been the example of Washington—Washington the aristocrat, Washington who had owned slaves—but Washington

who, almost single-handed, had held the cause of the colonists together until that cause was won; Washington who could have been king, but who had surrendered all his vast powers to the people; Washington who had been called back to preside over the Constitutional Convention; Washington who had been called again, as President, to set a new government upon its feet and to guide it with benevolent care through its first steps.

Washington had been present at the birth of this government of free men. Now this government was threatened.

On his way to the inauguration, Lincoln was invited to speak before the New Jersey State Senate. Visiting historic Trenton stirred memories of his boyhood. He told how, when he first began to read, he had been inspired by the struggles here of Washington and his troops. Then he voiced what may well be called "Lincoln's vision of America." He voiced, too, his sensing of a destiny that set him apart from other men—a destiny that was to guide him in the stern decisions of the tragic years ahead. He said:

> I recollect thinking then, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that these men struggled for. I am exceedingly anxious that that thing—that something even more than national independence; that something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all time to come—I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty . . . for perpetuating the object of that great struggle.

Lincoln never suggested, by word or deed, enforcing

democracy on other nations by military superiority. He *did* have this great hope for America: that she would preserve a heritage of freedom which would be the envy of the whole world.

No sooner had the war begun than the radical abolitionists of the North set up their clamor for the freeing of the slaves. They insisted that the President had the power, and should exercise it. Day and night the pressure upon him was terrific.

At the same time, Horace Greeley, in his *New York Tribune,* was attacking the President for not striking directly at slavery. Greeley was a power in the land, and Lincoln wanted his support. In response to a particularly vicious Greeley editorial, Lincoln wrote what was to rank as one of his most famous letters. Greeley had said that the President had no policy. Lincoln replied:

> As to the policy I 'seem to be pursuing,' as you say, I have not meant to leave anyone in doubt. I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution . . . My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that . . . I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.

That Lincoln could write such a letter while in his desk lay a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, was proof that to him slavery was a secondary issue. Preservation of the *Union* was paramount; preservation of the *Union* was justification even for the horrors of civil war.

The truth is that Lincoln had felt all along that the slaves should be freed if such action could contribute to the shortening of the war. But to free them could do little good, and possibly much harm, so long as the war was going badly. To a group of ministers who implored him to declare all slaves free, he said: "Gentlemen, if I cannot enforce the *Constitution* down south, how am I to enforce a mere *presidential proclamation?*"

Acting on a suggestion from Secretary Seward, he decided that with the first important military victory, he would act; and when the rebels were driven out of Maryland, he did so. On September 22, 1862, he read the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation to the cabinet. Two days later it was published for the country and the world to read. In December, in his annual message to Congress, he made an urgent plea for a plan of compensation to slave owners. He hoped and believed that this might resolve the whole problem, bring back the southern States, end the struggle, save the Union for all time.

But the appeal for compensated emancipation fell on deaf ears. Congress refused to act. The temper of the country was, in fact, veering away from the Administration. That fall, in the November elections, the Democrats had doubled their seats in Congress. Dark days were ahead. On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective. No compensation to the slave owners. The war went on.

Yes, the war went on—through bitter, disheartening months, while Lincoln searched for a general who could win battles; while he suffered the most cruel and vicious political attacks ever directed against an American President.

It was now the summer of 1864. The North was growing weary of the war, weary of the casualty lists and the draft, and taxes, and the costs. And many were wondering what they

were fighting for. In all quarters there seemed to be dissatisfaction with Lincoln's prosecution of the war.

An election was coming. How about the Republicans? Would they renominate Lincoln? At first there was serious doubt. But Grant, to whom the North now looked for military victories, expressed himself in no uncertain terms. He said: "I consider the re-election of President Lincoln as essential to the winning of the war as the success of our armies in the field."

So Lincoln was renominated. The days that followed were some of the darkest of the war. Would he be re-elected? Among those having the most serious doubts was the President himself. As the cabinet sat down to a meeting on August 23, he passed around a folded and sealed paper and asked each member to endorse his name on the outside. Then, without further comment, he put it into his coat pocket.

A few days later the Democrats met to frame a platform and choose a candidate. Their objectives were confusing. They wanted peace; and they also wanted a military man for President. Strangely enough, they got both. The first plank in their platform called for immediate negotiated peace, and their candidate was General George B. McClellan, who had failed so miserably as Lincoln's first commander of the Union armies.

In August, Lincoln's defeat seemed almost certain. In September, fate entered the scene. Sherman took Atlanta. Sheridan swept through the Shenandoah Valley. At last the *military* tide had turned. Such victories set the North to celebrating, helped to undermine the Democrats' peace platform.

Election Day was November 8. Up to the last hour the result was still uncertain. Some four million men cast their ballots. Nearly a million of the soldiers had no opportunity

to vote, either because they were marching or fighting, or because their home-State legislatures refused them the right to vote in the field.

Of the votes cast, Lincoln received fifty-five per cent and McClellan forty-five—a margin slender enough to justify all the victor's earlier doubts—slender enough to justify, too, the course he had planned in case the election went against him.

At the first cabinet meeting after Election Day, he took a paper from his desk and said: "Gentlemen, do you remember last summer I asked you all to sign your names to the back of a paper of which I did not show you the inside? This is it."

Then he read as follows:

Executive Mansion
Washington
August 23, 1864

This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterwards.

A. Lincoln

The President said: "You will remember that this was written at a time when as yet we had no adversary, and seemed to have no friends. I then solemnly resolved on the course of action indicated above. I resolved, in case of the election of General McClellan, being certain he would be the candidate—that I would see him and talk matters over with him. I would say, 'General, the election has demonstrated that you are stronger, have more influence with the American people than I. Now let us together, you with your influence, and I with all the executive power of the govern-

ment, try to save the country. You raise as many troops as you possibly can for this final trial, and I will devote all my energies to assisting and finishing the war.' "

Facing possible defeat, he had still seen himself charged with one great, sacred trust—the saving of the Union.

On the evening of November 10, a crowd gathered at the north portico of the White House to serenade the President. In response to insistent calls, Lincoln stepped out through the window and spoke to his visitors. He knew his words would be eagerly awaited, not only by the crowd before him but by the nation. And in those few minutes, he expressed a devotion to the American way of self-government not surpassed in his Gettysburg Speech or his Second Inaugural. In part, he said:

> We cannot have free government without elections; and if the rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might fairly claim to have already conquered and ruined us . . . But the election, along with its incidental and undesirable strife, has done good too. It has demonstrated that a people's government can sustain a national election in the midst of a great civil war. Until now, it has not been known to the world that this was a possibility . . . And now that the election is over, may not all having a common interest reunite in a common effort to save our common country?

What would Lincoln say and do if he could reach across the years and lay a comforting hand upon the burdened shoulders of today? Surely he would say, as he said again and again and again, "I would do whatever will help men to be free—whatever will help free men to govern themselves—whatever will preserve the rights of free men under the Constitution."

He would say, as he said to General Frémont, who had exceeded his authority:

> You speak of (your action) as being the only means of saving the government. On the contrary, it is itself the surrender of the government. Can it be pretended that it is any longer the Government of the United States—any government of constitution and laws—whenever a general or a president may make permanent rules of property by proclamation?

What would Lincoln do, what would he say about labor and capital, about the rewards of toil and the rewards of enterprise? He saw clearly their function in a land of free men. He said more than eighty years ago:

> The prudent beginner in the world labors for wages for a while, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account for another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement to all.

And what do you suppose Lincoln would say to soldiers weary of war? To just such men he spoke in 1864—the men of the 166th Ohio Regiment, when they passed through Washington:

> It is not merely for today, but for all time to come, that we should perpetuate for our children's children that great and free government which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours. I happen, temporarily, to occupy this White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has. It is in order that each one of you may have, through this free government which we have

> enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise, and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. It is for this the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our birthright . . .

Is there not, in this, evidence anew that Lincoln, rising above the confusion of his time, rising above the minds of little men, never lost the vision inspired in him by Washington—never lost the firm conviction that this free government was the "last best hope of earth," something to be treasured, protected, fostered for future generations, even with the sacrifice of life itself!

On March 4, 1865, with the war almost over, Lincoln spoke the undying words of his Second Inaugural:

> With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

When Abraham Lincoln spoke these words to all his countrymen as one great family, was he not, with the prophetic vision that had marked him all his life, speaking across the years to those who guide the course of the Union that he saved?

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